



**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**  
Central Region - Denver, Colorado

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Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Winston Larison  
Subject: – CEN21LA080, N69HF, Hitchcock TX  
Date: 12/10/2020

During the telephone conversation Mr. Larison stated the following:

Mr. Larison maintained a hanger on the same row as the accident pilot, Austin Stahl. On the day of the accident (December 8, 2020) Mr. Larison was in his hanger when he heard Mr. Stahl start his airplane's engine. He said he went outside his hanger and saw Mr. Stahl sitting in his airplane's cockpit and the canopy was closed. He said the airplane was west of him and pointed west. He then observed the airplane accelerate down the ramp and takeoff across two active runways. He said the airplane went into the grass before it became airborne and he thought the pilot was going to lose control of the airplane before it became airborne.

Dan Baker  
National Transportation Safety Board  
Senior Air Safety Investigator



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Central Region - Denver, Colorado

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Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: George Gould  
Subject: – CEN21LA080, N69HF, Hitchcock TX  
Date: 12/10/2020

During the telephone conversation Mr. Gould stated the following:

Mr. Gould maintained a hanger on the same row as the accident pilot, Austin Stahl. On the day of the accident (December 8, 2020) Mr. Gould attended an airport advisory meeting and brought a packet of materials to Mr. Stahl at his hanger. He said Mr. Stahl was working on his airplane on the ramp outside his hanger, the hanger was open, and there were tools out in the hanger. He said Mr. Stahl was distracted and avoided talking to him. Mr. Gould stated Mr. Stahl “acted very distant” and he thought Mr. Stahl may have been impaired. Mr. Gould then went to his own hanger where he later heard Mr. Stahl’s airplane engine start and run up. He did not see the airplane takeoff.

Mr. Gould said Mr. Winston Larson was present on the ramp and had witnessed Mr. Stahl’s airplane takeoff from the ramp area. He said Mr. Ted Farmer was taxiing his airplane when Mr. Stahl’s airplane took off in front of him.

Dan Baker  
National Transportation Safety Board  
Senior Air Safety Investigator

Mr. Reyes/Mr. Baker,

This is my account of the RV-6 departure that you both requested over the phone.

I was at KGLS working on December 8<sup>th</sup> starting at 10am. I saw Austin Stahl working on and washing the RV-6 N69HF in front of his hangar. The cowling had been removed at one point. N69HF was at the West end of the taxi way between the two rows of North hangars at a West heading. I was at my hangar on the same taxi way  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way down, East of the airplane, or behind the airplane. At approximately 2pm I heard an airplane start and go to a high power setting. I looked over and saw 9HF accelerating at a West heading. It crossed both taxi way B and runway 18-36. The aircraft was bouncing, pitching and yawing as it accelerated. It appeared very erratic and was very close to ground looping or cartwheeling. I ran in that direction to assist because I thought there was going to be an accident. The RV turned North West and became airborne. It leveled off and became stabilized at about 50 feet agl and flew over the water North of the airport. When over the water, it turned to a South West heading following the coast, maintaining approximately the same altitude until I lost sight of it. I ran back to my hangar to get my phone and call the tower. The controller I spoke with said he saw the airplane over the water but didn't know it departed from KGLS. I asked if he could track him visually in case he needed assistance but he said they lost sight of him as well.

If you need anything further from me please call, text, or e-mail.

Best regards,

Winston Larison





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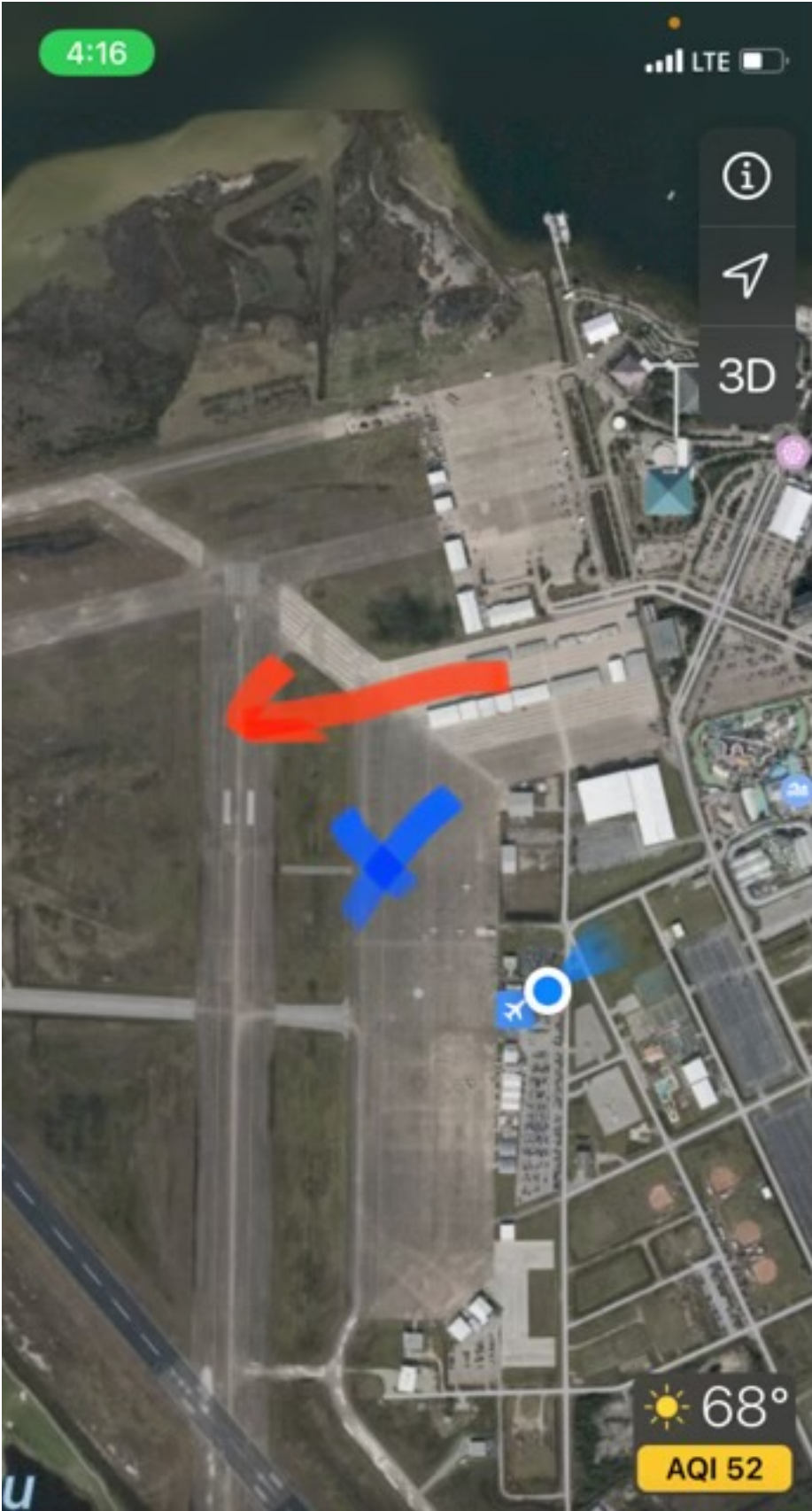
Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Ted Farmer  
Subject: – CEN21LA080, N69HF, Hitchcock TX  
Date: 12/10/2020

During the telephone conversation Mr. Farmer stated the following:

Mr. Farmer was taxiing his airplane northbound on the parallel taxiway when he saw an airplane “shoot out” of the ramp area about 200 yards in front of him. The airplane appeared to become airborne about the time it hit the grass area. He said it looked like aircraft control was an issue and the airplane was flying very erratically. He said he did not hear the airplane make any radio calls on the ground frequency and he switched to the tower frequency, but he did not hear any radio calls from the airplane there either. He said the distance from the accident pilot’s hanger to where it became airborne was probably 600-700 ft.

Mr. Farmer provided two google earth images with his drawings of where the airplane took off from and flew to initially. He said the red arrow in the images depicts the flight path of the airplane departing to the west and the blue X depicts his position on the taxiway when he saw the airplane depart.



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Dan Baker  
National Transportation Safety Board  
Senior Air Safety Investigator

Subject: Airplane incident over Harborwalk Community, Hitchcock TX  
December 8, 2020  
3:58 p.m.

Statement of Candice Johnson.

At approximately 3:58 p.m. on December 8, 2020, I observed a small plane flying at very low altitude---300 feet estimated---over Harborwalk.

I had gone onto the front porch of our house as a delivery person had pulled into the driveway, and immediately heard the sound of an approaching small plane. Nearly at the same time, a small aircraft passed over our house at high speed from approximately North to South.

The plane appeared to be initiating a slight turn East as it exited Harborwalk out over the water, but I then lost sight of it behind other homes.

My husband was at his desk on our top floor and commented that he thought that maybe a neighbor had a plane and was buzzing the neighborhood.

On December 9, I opened our morning paper and saw that a plane had crashed in Hitchcock at approximately the same time as I saw the plane over our house. The wreckage of that plane looked identical to the plane that I saw go over our house.





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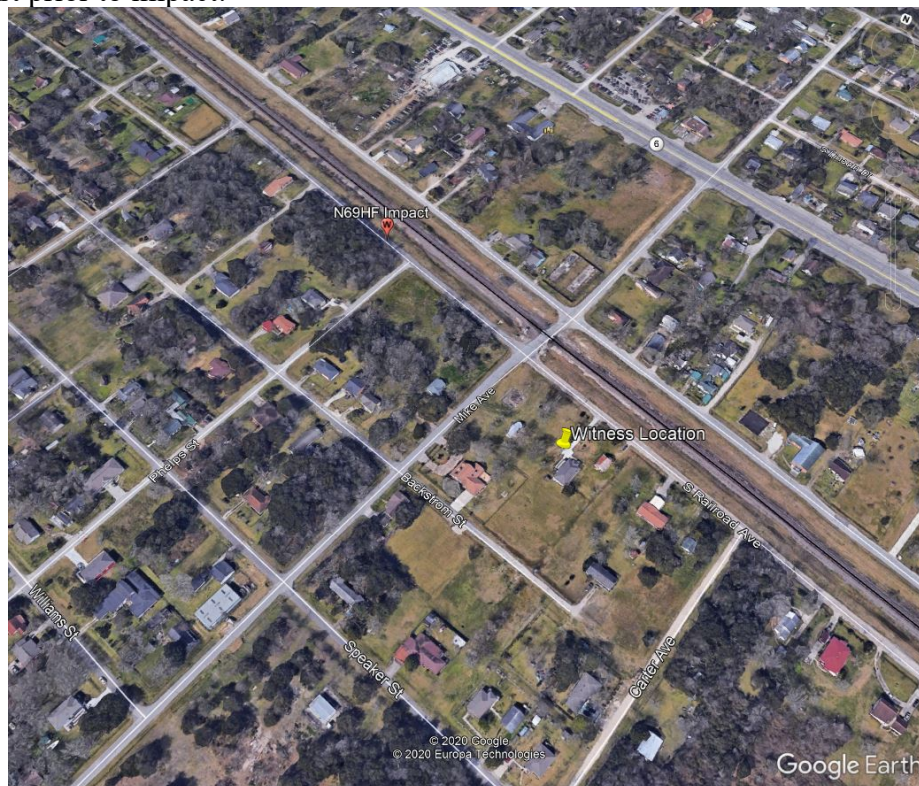
### Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Nicole Sumlin, [REDACTED]  
Subject: – CEN21LA080, N69HF, Hitchcock TX  
Date: 12/18/2020

During the telephone conversation Ms. Sumlin stated the following:

She was in her home at [REDACTED], when she heard a loud noise and her house began to shake. She looked out her window and observed an airplane flying low to the right side of her house. She described the airplane as out of control as it went down, wobbling and moving unusually. She said the airplane was moving more horizontally than vertically as it descended. She said the noise sounded like an engine and it was constant before the airplane impacted the ground. She responded to the scene and then returned to her house. She thought she called 911 about 1541.

Based on the location of Ms. Sumlin's home, the location of the wreckage, and her description of the flight path of the airplane, the airplane would have been traveling northwest prior to impact.



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Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Brian Stanton  
Subject: – CEN21LA080, N69HF, Hitchcock TX  
Date: 12/18/2020

Mr. Stanton was a close friend of Austin Stahl, a pilot who was fatally injured while piloting N69HF. During the telephone conversation Mr. Stanton stated the following:

In the summer of 2020 Mr Stanton became aware Mr. Stahl was having episodes, or “panic attacks” when he witnessed one for the first time, but he had seen “strange” behavior prior to that but didn’t know why. During a weekend getaway he was having coffee with Mr. Stahl when his behavior changed “like a light switch.” Mr. Stahl started talking about something completely different and slurring his speech. Mr. Stahl’s family members told Mr. Stanton that episodes had been going on for some time and he would fall over like he was drunk. Mr. Stanton said this episode that he witnessed went on for about 24 hours. When he came out of it, Mr. Stahl could not remember what had occurred during that time.

Mr. Stanton said he talked to Mr. Stahl about the episode and Mr. Stahl was ashamed and upset. Mr. Stanton thought Mr. Stahl and his family would do something about the episodes. Mr. Stanton said Mr. Stahl had gotten an MRI later but was told it didn’t show anything abnormal. Mr. Stanton did not know what doctors Mr. Stahl may have been seeing.

Mr. Stanton received word Mr. Stahl was having another episode the day prior to the accident. Mr. Stanton called Mr. Stahl and confronted him about the situation and then met with him. He said there was no smell of alcohol when they met and Mr. Stahl agreed to go to the emergency room (ER). They drove to the ER and Mr. Stahl started walking to the door, but turned and walked away. Mr. Stanton said Mr. Stahl was shaking and sweating and scared to go in to the hospital. They left the hospital and talked for a couple hours, ate, and watched a movie and Mr. Stahl seemed to do better. However, Mr. Stanton didn’t think they had accomplished anything in getting Mr. Stahl help for his situation.

Mr. Stanton further stated that Mr. Stahl would walk and stumble like he was drunk and become withdrawn during the episodes, but he never smelled alcohol or witnessed excessive drinking.

Mr. Stanton was aware Mr. Stahl had gone for a run the morning of the accident and had gone to the airport to work on the airplane that day. He said Mr. Stahl had recently been nominated to the airport board of directors, but missed the first meeting that was scheduled for the day morning of the accident.

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Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Konroe Stahl  
Subject: – CEN21LA080, N69HF, Hitchcock TX  
Date: 12/15/2020

Mr. Stahl is the father of Austin Stahl, a pilot who was fatally injured while piloting N69HF. During the telephone conversation Mr. Stahl stated the following:

Mr. Stahl indicated his son had been using his airplane for about a year for private use. The airplane had developed a magneto problem and an IA (aircraft mechanic), Mr. Bill Brown, had helped work on the airplane; however, he did not think Mr. Brown was present at the airport on the day of the accident.

Mr. Stahl said he learned a lot since the accident. He said Austin had “been having episodes of uncontrollability” for weeks or months before the accident.” The episodes involved problems with motor control, having the shakes, and he had gone unconscious a couple of times. Austin had an episode before Thanksgiving where he had fallen and his arm was in a sling. Other family members and friends told Mr. Stahl Austin had an episode the day prior to the accident and had gone to the hospital, but did not go in. He was also told Austin had no recollection of the episodes.

Austin had told Mr. Stahl he was having issues a couple years prior to the accident and had seen a local doctor. He said the doctor told Austin it was an electrolyte issue, but Mr. Stahl did not know if that was true. Austin was a Southwest Airlines pilot and Mr. Stahl did not think the airline knew of any of Austin’s issues. He said Austin had taken a 5 year leave from Southwest at reduced pay, but retained his benefits.

Mr. Stahl said he was not aware if Austin had any marital or financial problems.

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Record of Telephone Conversation

Person Interviewed: Tyler Stahl  
Subject: – CEN21LA080, N69HF, Hitchcock TX  
Date: 1/25/2021

Tyler Stahl is the son of Austin Stahl, a pilot who was fatally injured while piloting N69HF. During the telephone conversation Mr. Stahl stated the following:

Tyler stated his father's episodes had started about 4 years ago, but he only became aware of them about a year before the accident. He said the episodes were becoming more frequent, but he wasn't aware there were any for about a month before the accident. Tyler was aware his father had an MRI, but was told there was nothing on it. His mother had told him Austin was seeing a therapist infrequently. Tyler did not know what doctor's his father had been seeing prior to the accident.

Tyler said he had not witnessed an episode firsthand. He thinks his father was under stress and the episodes were pressure induced. He did not think his father was taking any prescription medications and thought his father's electrolytes were low.

Tyler's mother told him Austin had told her that he wasn't planning on flying the day of the accident and he had left his headset and flying gear at the house. Austin had gone to the airport to work on the airplane and confirm the magnetos were working.

Tyler said that his mother was distraught and did not think she could make a statement. She did not want to talk to investigators.

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